matter in SAARC Foreign Ministers Meetings; and

(f) if so, whether there is any agreement on issue of Visas?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) The yearwise figures in respect of the visas issued to Pakistani nationals during the last three years are as below:—

1993	:	45927
1994	:	34574
1995	:	24218

Since the closure of Consulate General of India, Karachi in January 1995 at the request of Pakistan, visas are being issued only by the High Commission of India, Islamabad.

(b) Figures are not known as Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi does not provide this information.

(c) and (d) Pakistan has been following a restrictive visa regime for Indian nationals which includes pre-verification of visa applications on a case-by-case basis causing long delays and inconvenience to Indians desirous of visiting Pakistan.

(e) and (f) The issuance of visa by India and Pakistan to each other's nationals is a bilateral issue governed by the India-Pakistan Visa Agreement signed in 1974. Hence the matter has not been discussed in SAARC Foreign Ministers Meetings. SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme covers only specific categories of persons, including *inter alia* (i) Supreme Court Judges; (ii) Members of the National Parliament of each member State; and (iii) Minister of Foreign/External Affairs of each member State.

However, India has decided unilaterally to sizeably increase the number of entries to India.

राजमार्गों को सुधारने के लिए नई प्रौद्योगिकी

1133. श्री अजीत जोगी: क्या जल-भूतल परिवहन मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या देश में राजमार्गों के सुधार हेतु नई प्रौद्योगिकी का प्रयोग करने के संबंध में कोई प्रस्ताव है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है;

(ग) क्या नई प्रौद्योगिकी उपलब्ध कराने में सहायता देने के लिए विदेशी विलम्बों को आमंत्रित किया गया है; और

(घ) इस संबंध में अंतिम निर्णय कब तक लिया जाएगा?

जल-भूतल परिवहन मंत्री (श्री टी.जी. वेंटरामन): (क) से (घ) देश में राजमार्गों तथा राष्ट्रीय राजमार्गों के सुधार के लिए जांच-पड़ताल, डिजाइन, निर्माण, यातायात नियंत्रण, परिवहन, सड़क और पुल प्रबंधन जैसे क्षेत्र में प्रौद्योगिकी का निरन्तर उन्नयन किया जा रहा है। आवश्यकतानुसार विदेशी विशेषज्ञों की सहायता भी ली जा रही है। चूंकि प्रौद्योगिकी उन्नयन एक सतत् प्रक्रिया है इसलिए किसी निश्चित समय के बारे में बता पाना संभव नहीं है।

Linking of Peninsular and Himalayan Rivers

1134. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have estimated the cost of inter-linking of various peninsular and Himalayan rivers; and

(b) if so, the details thereof, river-wise?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA): (a) Yes, Sir. Very approximate cost of inter-linking of the various Peninsular Rivers and Himalayan Rivers as worked out by National Water Development Agency (NWDA) may be around Rs. 2, 30,000 crores including Power Component.

(b) Link wise cost can be available only after finalization of all feasibility reports.

Identification of Freedom Fighter

1135. SHRI JANARDAN YADAV: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there are several freedom fighters in the country who are not getting any pension from Government; and

(b) if so, the steps taken to identify such people and also grant pension for those freedom fighters?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) The freedom fighters who apply for grant of pension and fulfil the requirements as laid down under the scheme are sanctioned pension. However, many freedom fighters may not have applied for grant of pension under the scheme.

(b) There is no scheme to identify the freedom fighters and to grant pension. However, in 287 cases Government has granted pension *suo motu*.

Diversion of Funds sanctioned for building Bridges in Tamil Nadu

1136. SHRI O.P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of India has sanctioned money for the building of two bridges in Tamil Nadu for the benefit to the fishermen;

(b) if so, the date and amount of money sanctioned, whether Government of Tamil Nadu has utilised that money for the purpose for which it was given;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor and for which purpose that money was used; and

(d) the action propose to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Purchase of Tele-communication Equipment at High Prices

1137. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Department of Tele-communication reversed its recommendation on the purchase of certain test equipment in favour of a Hyderabad based firm resulting in an estimated loss to the tune of over Rs. 13 crore recently;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the equipment is being purchased from the firm and its associates at prices substantially higher than the lowest bids; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Department has placed advance purchase orders for 90% of the tendered quantity on the firms who were found to be fully meeting the tender conditions and have offered field proven instruments at the lowest price quoted amongst them. For the balance quantity, Advance Purchase Orders were placed on the new entrants at the lowest price quoted amongst them to encourage indigenous manufacturing.

Infrastructure Development in Paradeep Port Trust

1138. SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a prop- osal to take some steps for the development of some major ports;

(b) if so, the details of the develop- mental activities proposed for the year 1996-97;

(c) whether Government proposes to develop infrastructural facilities in Para- deep Port; and

(d) if so, the steps taken in that direction?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The list of important developmental schemes (both sanctioned and to be sanctioned) in respect of various major ports including Paradip Port which are included in Annual Plan 1996-97 is annexed as statement.